

MEMORIAL

OF

Sundry Importers and Venders of Hardware,

OF

THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

FEBRUARY 9, 1824.

Referred to the committee of the whole House to which is referred the bill to amend
the several acts imposing duties on imports and tonnage.

WASHINGTON:

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1824.

MEMORIAL.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled,

The Memorial of the subscribers, importers and venders of Hardware and Ironmongery, residing in the city of New York,

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS:

That your memorialists have perused, with deep interest, the bill to amend the several acts for imposing duties on imports, at present before the honorable the House of Representatives; and, so far as it proposes additional duties on articles imported and vended by your memorialists, they think the passage of the bill is opposed by every consideration of justice and sound policy.

Your memorialists cannot doubt, that the sole object of this bill is, to protect and encourage the manufactures of our country. Upon the general question, whether the Government ought to lay additional duties for the encouragement of domestic manufactures, your memorialists forbear to express their opinion, as such an expression is not necessary to the object of their present application. That no additional duties, upon articles vended in their line of trade, are necessary to the due protection and encouragement of the domestic manufacturers of those articles, your memorialists are, however, free to express their opinion; and they found this opinion upon the incontrovertible fact, that most of the persons with whom they have dealt, engaged in the home manufacture of such articles, have, under the existing tariff, been enabled, not only to support themselves, but gradually to extend their establishments, at a period of unprecedented depression in the prices of foreign articles of a similar kind. Independently of this general objection to the interference of the Legislature at this time, in imposing additional duties, there are other objections to the particular operation and details of the bill, some of which your memorialists will take the liberty of suggesting.

Your memorialists believe, that the increase of duties, proposed in the bill now before you, would be particularly oppressive on the less affluent part of the community, as it applies principally to articles of inferior value, and in most common use, including articles of indispensable necessity to manufacturers and mechanics. In illustration of this fact, we beg leave to refer you to the annexed document, which exhibits, correctly, the difference between the present and contemplated rates of duty, on a variety of articles. It is believed this table will speak in a language more strong and convincing, than any terms we can do.

The expediency of requiring specific duties, on so many articles of hardware, not in themselves very dissimilar from those which are contemplated to pay an ad valorem duty, your memorialists are constrained to dissent from. The great inequality in the cost of varie-

ties of the same denominations of goods, is the objection entitled to the most consideration; but the almost incredible increase of vexation and labor, both to the importer and collector, which would result from this change, is too serious to be overlooked; and, to place this circumstance before your Honorable Body in the most convincing light, a statement is annexed, shewing the plan of an entry under the present law, in contrast with one under the proposed bill, both made with reference to the same invoice.

The operation of the second section of the bill, could not, in the opinion of your memorialists, have been duly considered by the committee who reported it. The following statement will shew its operation in a few familiar instances. The article of slates now pays a duty of fifteen per cent.; but the duty on manufactures of wood is thirty per cent. According to this section, therefore, the duty on slates, inasmuch as it has a wooden frame, would be doubled. The article of shoe knives, together with all articles that have wooden handles, now pays a duty of twenty per cent.; under the section in question, the duty would be increased to thirty per cent. Besides, in many articles, it will be quite impracticable to ascertain the amount of duties, under this section. For instance, the article of spectacles; on the glass, one of the component parts of the article, there is a *duty per weight, and ad valorem*; on the weight, of three cents per pound, and, in addition thereto, an *ad valorem* duty of thirty per cent. Now it will be perceived, that the execution of the law in this and other similar instances, would not be practicable.

The third section of the bill contains a provision peculiarly liable to misunderstanding, or misconstruction, on the part of collectors of the public revenue. On this section it is observable, that the foreign manufacturers of hardware, particularly in Great Britain, have, for a great part of their goods, what are termed "standard prices," which were established previously to the late improvements in labor-saving machinery, and consequent reduction in the value of manufactures. This diminution in cost has not been met by a corresponding reduction of nominal prices, but by a proportionate discount from them, which discount varies with the market, but can, in no case, be considered, by those who fully understand the subject, as an allowance in nature of a bounty or premium, with which, we apprehend, it may be blended, unless more explicit terms are used.

Your memorialists will not further enlarge upon the subject, in this place, but, for the more detailed operations of the bill in question, would refer your Honorable Body to the statements and calculations contained in the annexed document. In conclusion, they will only add, that, if the bill in question becomes a law, it will give an undue advantage to those who are at present engaged in the domestic manufacture of articles, in the line of your memorialists; that it will amount to a prohibition of the importation of many articles of merchandise not at present manufactured in this country; that it will prove ruinous to the trade in which your memorialists are engaged, and peculiarly burdensome to the poor and middling class of society.

New York, January 31, 1824.